DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 060 672 95 EM 009 827

AUTHOR	Bertram, Charles L.; MacDonald, Randolph
TITLE	A Comparison of Parents' Attitudes Toward AEL's 'Around the Bend' and Other Children's Television Programs.
INSTITUTION	Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, W. Va.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.
REPORT NO	TR-21
BUREAU NO	BR-6-2909
PUB DATE	Dec 71
NOTE	17p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Commercial Television; *Educational Television; *Parent Attitudes; *Preschool Children; *Programing (Broadcast); Television; Television Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	*Around the Bend; Sesame Street

ABSTRACT

A survey was designed to determine how the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) produced noncommercial television program "Around the Bend" compared in appeal with other children's programs. A questionnaire was sent to random samples of parents with three to five year old children in three groups: those children who saw the program every day, children who watched the program eah day and were visited once a week by a paraprofessional home visitor, and children who watched the program, were visited once a week by the home visitor, and were exposed to a mobile classroom once a week. Results showed that "Around the Bend" was rated as good or better than two popular children's programs on commercial television and "Sesame Street." The highest rating was given the program on every question and by every treatment group. It was somewhat surprising that "Around the Bend" should have received consistently higher ratings than "Sesame Street", since "Around the Bend" is a black and white 30-minute program. However, "Around the Bend" had been available in the community longer, and was probably perceived as more relevant to the Appalachian area. (SH)

ED 060672

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by

Charles Bertram, Director
Research and Evaluation

and

Randolph MacDonald, Associate Educational Development Specialist
Research and Evaluation

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A Comparison of Parents' Attitudes Toward AEL's Around the Bend and other Children's Television Programs

The purpose of this study was to determine how the AEL-produced television program, Around the Bend, compared in parental appeal with other children's television programs. Data were gathered from parents of children in the program.

Description of Method

A survey form was designed to measure difference in parental attitude toward the following children's television programs: Misterogers, Captain Kangaroo, Romper Room, AEL's Around the Bend (which was not in color as were the other programs), and Sesame Street. A copy of the form is included as Attachment 21.1 to this report. The form was designed to determine which programs were being viewed by the children, whether the parents viewed the programs with their children, whether the parents thought the children enjoyed and/or learned anything from the various television programs, and whether the parents thought the programs were "good" for their children. In addition, the television programs were rated by the parents from the "very best program" to the "very worst program," and the parents were asked to give the sponsors' names.

The parental attitude survey form (see Attachment 21.1) was mailed to a random sample of 300 parents of children in three different treatment groups of the Preschool Education Program. The three treatment groups were:

- Those 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children who had the opportunity to observe AEL's 30-minute television program each day (TV only).

- The children who watched the television program each day and whose home was visited once each week by a paraprofessional home visitor (TV-HV).

- The children who observed the television program, were visited by the home visitor, and were exposed to a mobile classroom once each week (TV-HV-MC).

A more complete description of the treatments and treatment groups is given in the summary section of the Early Childhood Education Evaluation Report.

A random sub-sample of 100 children was selected from each of the three treatment groups, for a total sample of 300 children. The one restriction on the sampling was that only one child from each household was selected. The survey forms were mailed in the spring of 1971 to the parents of the randomly selected children. As noted in Technical Report No. 10, the questionnaires for the 1969-70 evaluation were mailed through the College of Human Resources at West Virginia University under its letterhead. This was done in an initial effort to reduce bias caused by AEL asking for an opinion about an AEL product. However, as this was the second year that many of these people were asked to respond to this questionnaire, it was believed that they were aware of the fact that AEL was doing the inquiring. Because of this presumed awareness on the part of the parents, it did not seem necessary to use the College of Human Resources, West Virginia University, as an intermediary. Seventy (70) percent of those who were mailed a copy of the survey questionnaire returned a completed form. Table 21.1 shows the number and percent of respondents from each treatment group.

Table 21.1

Number and Percent of Parents of Preschool Education Program Children by Treatment Group Who Responded to the 1970-71 Television Survey Form

Treatment Group	Forms Mailed	No. Returned	Percent Response
TV-HV-MC	100	79	79
TV-HV	100	92	92
TV only	100	39	39
Total	300	210	70

(2)

Analysis of Responses

The most discriminating results were provided by a tabulation of the forced choice responses on the reverse side of the survey form. The parents were asked to "rank the programs from the very best to the very worst program" by placing a 1 by the program they liked best, a 2 by the one liked next best, and so forth. This ranking for all the parents sampled is shown in Table 21.2.

According to Table 21.2, approximately 47 percent of all the parents placed Around the Bend first, Sesame Street was ranked highest by 27 percent, 22 percent of those sampled placed Captain Kangaroo in the highest category, and Romper Room and Misterogers were given the highest rating by 1.42 percent and 2.38 percent respectively. These results reflect the description of response data found the previous year and reported in Technical Report 10, 1970. There are slightly fewer second and third place ranks than first place ranks in the total sample because a few parents gave only first place ranks to the programs.

The first place rankings of the parents of the TV-HV-MC are revealed in Table 21.3. As can be noted, Around the Bend is given the highest rating of any of the programs, including Sesame Street.

Table 21.2

Number and Percent of First, Second, and Third Place Ratings Given Five Preschool Television Programs

Total Group
N = 210

Rating	Misterogers		Captain Kangaroo		Romper Room		Around the Bend		Sesame Street	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	5	2.38	47	22.38	3	1.42	98	46.66	57	27.14
2	20	9.85	51	25.12	29	14.28	72	35.46	31	15.27
3	32	16.93	47	24.86	56	29.62	27	14.28	27	14.28

Table 21.3

Number and Percent of First, Second, and Third Place Ratings
Given Five Preschool Television Programs

TV-HV-MC
N = 79

Rating	Misterogers		Captain Kangaroo		Romper Room		Around the Bend		Sesame Street	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	3.79	19	24.05	1	1.26	30	37.97	26	32.91
2	8	10.25	20	25.64	9	11.53	33	42.30	9	11.53
3	10	12.98	23	29.87	19	24.67	13	16.88	12	15.58

Of the 92 respondents whose children were in the treatment group which received a home visitor plus the TV program (TV-HV), approximately 51 percent rated Around the Bend as "best." Both Captain Kangaroo and Sesame Street received the rating of "best" by approximately 23 percent of the parents. Misterogers and Romper Room were given a rating of 1 by only 2 percent and 1 percent of the respondents respectively. Table 21.4 summarizes these findings. These results again reflect the findings reported in 1970.

Approximately 54 percent of parents whose children were exposed only to the TV program and received no home visitor or mobile classroom rated Around the Bend as "very good." Sesame Street was given a "very good" rating by the second highest number of people. Captain Kangaroo was given this highest rating by approximately 18 percent of the responding parents. These results are depicted in Table 21.5.

The responses to the first ten questions of the survey were somewhat discriminative regarding the children's enjoyment and amount of learning from the five programs sampled. The percentages of positive and negative responses to all ten questions are tabulated as Table 21.6.

The responses to Questions 1 and 2 indicated that varying percentages of the parents had seen or could receive all five programs. The highest proportion of positive responses to these two questions were indicated with regard to Captain Kangaroo, Romper Room, and Around the Bend. These programs have been shown continuously in these locations for the previous three years. Misterogers and Sesame Street had been available in the area since October, 1970. The relatively low responses to Questions 1 and 2

for Misterogers and Sesame Street possibly could have been due to a lack of awareness of their availability on the part of these parents. Further, the relatively low responses to Questions 3 through 10 in reference to these two may reflect the parents' lack of awareness of these programs because of their relative recency of availability. Reactions to Question 4, which asked whether children watched the program three or more times per week, reflected the differential responses similar to those for Questions 1 and 2. Ninety percent of the parents said they could receive Around the Bend (Question 2), and 98 percent said their children watched the program (Question 3). Actually, a few of the children watched the program in the house of a neighbor.

Approximately 40 percent of the parents responding claimed that they watched the four programs other than Around the Bend with their children (Question 5). By comparison, 80 percent reported watching Around the Bend with their children. AEL's program was enjoyed by 90 percent of the children as indicated by the participating parents (Question 6). Approximately 43 percent of the parents reported enjoyment of the four programs other than AEL's Around the Bend. In contrast, 84 percent of the responding parents said that they enjoyed Around the Bend themselves (Question 7). When asked if they believed that their children learned from these programs (Question 8), the positive responses to this question were as follows: 43 percent, Misterogers; 84 percent, Captain Kangaroo; 63 percent, Romper Room; 93 percent, Around the Bend; and 61 percent, Sesame Street. Regarding Questions 9 and 10, which asked whether the parents thought that these shows were good for their children and whether they encouraged their children to watch them, 94 percent responded affirmatively to Around the Bend on Question 9, and 88 did so on Question 10. The next highest response was to Captain Kangaroo, which received positive replies from slightly more than 70 percent of respondents on both questions.

Since different numbers of homes received the different programs, an effort was made to equalize the responses to Questions 3-10 according to the frequency of "yes" responses to Question 2 (Do you receive the program?) for Around the Bend, Sesame Street, and Misterogers. The positive responses to Questions 3-10 relative to the percent of the families who received Around the Bend were used as a reference point in order to determine equivalent proportions for the other two programs. An example of the procedure follows: 90 percent of parents claimed to receive Around the Bend, and the percent of positive responses to Question 3 was 98 percent. As 50 percent claimed that they received Misterogers, a positive response by 54 percent to Question 3 (90:98 :: 50:X) would have been an equivalent response to that of Question 3 for Around the Bend. The results of these calculations appear as Table 21.7.

Following the calculations of equivalent proportions for Misterogers and Sesame Street, a Chi-square test was performed on expected vs. observed percentages for each of the two programs separately, which in essence permitted a comparison between Around the Bend and the other two programs.

The Chi-square value calculated between the observed and expected proportions of positive responses to Questions 3-10 was not significant regarding Misterogers, which indicated that people responded to these eight questions to a proportionally similar degree as to those pertaining to Around the Bend. However, in reference to Sesame Street the Chi-square value for all eight questions was significant ($\chi^2 = 22.57$ $p<.05$). The specific questions which led most significantly to the high Chi-square value were No. 4 ($\chi^2 = 9.657$ $p<.01$) and No. 5 ($\chi^2 = 5.730$ $p<.01$). Questions 4 and 5 asked whether the youngsters viewed the program three or more times a week and whether the parents watched the program with the youngster. Affirmative responses to these two questions were significantly lower for Sesame Street than for Misterogers or Around the Bend.

A comparison of parents' attitudes toward Captain Kangaroo, Romper Room, AEL's Around the Bend, Misterogers, and Sesame Street has been presented. Before further explanation is given, a few qualifying statements need to be made regarding the intent and accuracy of this survey.

The survey was not intended to be a general audience rating of the three television programs; it was intended to survey the attitudes of parents whose children were involved to differing degrees with the Appalachia Preschool Education Program. Most of the parents, especially those in the TV-HV-MC and TV-HV treatment groups, were familiar with AEL's instructional television program and were encouraged to watch it with their children. Also, there could have been some bias because the parents knew that "their program" was on trial. Effort was made to play this down, but the program has received considerable attention in the rural section of West Virginia where the children live.

Table 21.4

Number and Percent of First, Second, and Third Place Ratings
Given Five Preschool Television Programs

TV-HV
N=92

Rating	Misterogers		Captain Kangaroo		Romper Room		Around the Bend		Sesame Street	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	2	2.17	21	22.82	1	1.08	47	51.08	21	22.86
2	8	9.19	21	24.13	14	16.09	29	33.33	14	16.09
3	20	24.39	14	17.07	26	31.07	9	10.97	13	15.85

Table 21.5

Number and Percent of First, Second, and Third Place Ratings
Given Five Preschool Television Programs

TV only
N=39

Rating	Misterogers		Captain Kangaroo		Romper Room		Around the Bend		Sesame Street	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	0	0.00	7	17.94	1	2.56	21	53.84	10	25.64
2	4	10.25	10	25.64	6	16.04	10	25.64	8	20.51
3	2	6.06	11	3.33	11	3.33	5	15.15	4	12.21

Table 21.6

Percent of Yes Responses to First
Ten Questions of Survey Form According
to Different Television Programs*

Question	Misterogers	Captain Kangaroo	Romper Room	Around the Bend	Sesame Street
1....ever seen program?	51	98	90	98	75
2....can you receive program?	50	94	90	90	71
3....children watch?	45	91	82	98	66
4....watch 3 or more times?	37	73	56	89	44
5....you watch with them?	33	53	43	80	44
6....children enjoy?	44	87	71	90	59
7....you enjoy?	33	74	51	84	55
8....do children learn...?	43	84	63	93	61
9....good for children?	45	85	70	94	62
10....you encourage children to watch?	39	72	71	88	57

*See Attachment 21.1 for the exact wording of the questions.
The number of respondents was approximately 210 for each question.

Table 21.7

Affirmative Responses to Questions 3-10
for Misterogers and Sesame Street Weighed According
to the Proportion Receiving Around the Bend

Question	Around the Bend	Misterogers		Sesame Street	
2....can you receive program?	90%	50%	Expected Proportion	71%	Expected Proportion
3....children watch?	98	45	54	66	77
4....watch 3 or more times?	89	37	49	44	70
5....you watch with them?	80	33	44	44	63
6....children enjoy?	90	44	50	59	71
7....you enjoy?	84	33	46	55	66
8....do children learn...?	93	43	47	61	73
9....good for children?	94	45	52	62	74
10....you encourage children to watch?	88	39	49	57	69
		χ^2=13.064		χ^2=22.57	
		$p < .50$		$p < .05$	

Implications and Conclusions

The noncommercial instructional television program, Around the Bend, was rated as good as or better than children's commercial television programs by the parents of children in the Appalachia Preschool Education Program. The highest rating was given Around the Bend on every question and by every treatment group. In reference to the responses of the total group (N=210), the highest rating was attributed to AEL's program by approximately 47 percent of the respondents. The treatment group attributing the "excellent" rating to Around the Bend to the greatest degree was that of TV only (53.84 percent). A possible explanation for this could be the fact that this group only had the TV program (no home visitor and no mobile classroom) and therefore placed greater emphasis on a television program.

A somewhat surprising fact is that AEL's Around the Bend (a black and white 30-minute program) received a consistently higher rating than Sesame Street by all groups involved. Four explanations for this seem plausible at this time.

- Those responding had been involved with AEL's program for at least a year and, therefore, they could have been more aware of Around the Bend because of that involvement.

- Sesame Street had been available in the area involved only since October 1970. Thus, a lack of awareness of Sesame Street's availability could have been reflected in the relatively low frequency of highest ratings for this program.

- Sesame Street possibly was perceived to have an inner-city content orientation which would not have been valued by Appalachian parents.

- The children and parents liked Around the Bend better because it was more suited to their needs.

As far as parental attitudes are concerned, instructional television appears to be an acceptable medium for early childhood education programs. The parents reported that the children watched the programs, that they themselves watched the programs, that both they and their children enjoyed these programs, and that they thought their children learned from watching these television programs.

Attachment 21.1

TELEVISION VIEWER QUESTIONNAIRE

(1) Please complete this questionnaire by placing an "X" in the proper space, and return it in the enclosed envelope, along with the family resource survey.

EXAMPLE:

0. Are you a parent? Yes x No ____

1. Do you have a television set? Yes____ No____
   (If "no" stop here)
2. Do you have children? Yes____ No____
   (If "no" stop here)
3. Are any of these children between 3 and 6 years of age? Yes____ No____
4. Is your television connected to a cable? Yes____ No____

(2) Place an "X" in the appropriate spaces for each program.

	MISTEROGERS			CAPTAIN KANGAROO			ROMPER ROOM			AROUND THE BEND			SESAME STREET		
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	Nc	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. Can you receive these programs?															
2. Have you ever seen the programs?															
3. Do your children ever watch these programs?															
4. Do they watch the programs 3 or more times a week?															
5. Do you watch or sit in the room when they watch these programs?															
6. Do the children enjoy the programs?															
7. Do you enjoy the programs?															
8. Do your children learn from the programs?															
9. Are these programs good for your children?															
10. Do you encourage your children to watch these programs?															

15

(13)

(3) Please rank each of these programs from the one you like the best (1) to the one you like the least.

(14)

EXAMPLE:
Going to a movie 1 (best)
Going to the dentist 3 (worst)
Going to school 2 (next best)

CAPTAIN KANGAROO _____

ROMPER ROOM _____

AROUND THE BEND _____

SESAME STREET _____

MISTEROGERS _____

(4) If you remember the sponsor's name place it in the blank next to the program.

CAPTAIN KANGAROO _____

ROMPER ROOM _____

AROUND THE BEND _____

SESAME STREET _____

MISTEROGERS _____

(5) Can you receive Channel 9, WSWP in Beckley-Oak Hill? Yes_____ No_____ Don't know_____

(6) If so, is the reception clear enough for regular viewing? Yes_____ No_____ Don't Know_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INFORMATION. PLEASE RETURN THE FORM IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE.

References

Hays, William L. Statistics (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).